



Comintern

## Machinery

Marx begins this great chapter on “Machinery and Modern Industry” (**attached**; download linked below) by developing the idea of division of labour in manufacture, to the division of processes among machines.

*“A real machinery system, however, does not take the place of these independent machines, until the subject of labour goes through a connected series of detail processes, that are carried out by a chain of machines of various kinds, the one supplementing the other. Here we have again the co-operation by division of labour that characterises Manufacture; only now, it is a combination of detail machines.”*

*“As soon as a machine executes, without man's help, all the movements requisite to elaborate the raw material, needing only attendance from him, we have an automatic system of machinery, and one that is susceptible of constant improvement in its details.”*

*“Modern Industry had therefore itself to take in hand the machine, its characteristic instrument of production, and to construct machines by machines. It was not till it did this, that it built up for itself a fitting technical foundation, and stood on its own feet. Machinery, simultaneously with the increasing use of it, in the first decades of this century, appropriated, by degrees, the fabrication of machines proper. But it was only during the decade preceding 1866, that the construction of railways and ocean steamers on a stupendous scale called into existence the cyclopean machines now employed in the construction of prime movers.”*

*“Modern Industry raises the productiveness of labour to an extraordinary degree, [but] it is by no means equally clear, that this increased productive force is not, on the other hand, purchased by an increased expenditure of labour. Machinery, like every other component of constant capital, creates no new value, but yields up its own value to the product that it serves to beget.”*

The long last paragraph of Section 4 is a denunciation of the horrors of the factory system.

Section 5 shows the brutal effect of machinery on the working class from the beginning of machine-working, which effects have been felt all along and still are felt today, two centuries after the “industrial revolution”. Marx was an eye-witness to a great expansion of this system and a true witness of its terrible consequences for the working class.

To read the valuable sections of this chapter that have not been included in the PDF, please go to:

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch15.htm>

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Capital V1, C15, Machinery and Modern Industry](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).